DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 196 SO 028 558

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Butts, R. Freeman |
| TITLE | At Last - "A Civics Lesson for All of Us." Working Paper Series in Education. |
| INSTITUTION | Stanford Univ., CA. Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace. |
| REPORT NO | ED-92-2 |
| PUB DATE | 1992-05-00 |
| NOTE | 32p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Stanford University, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford, CA, 94305-6010. |
| PUB TYPE | Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Opinion Papers (120) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Change; *Citizenship Education; *Civics; Civil Rights; Constitutional Law; Democracy; Elementary Secondary Education; Freedom; Justice; National Standards; Political Science; *Standards |

ABSTRACT

This essay chronicles the move toward national standards in the content areas and examines the civics lessons to be learned from the debates. The paper notes the contradiction found in historically advocating local control and support of schools, moving toward the setting of national education goals and standards with little attention paid to democratic values. This U.S. movement is paralleled by the former communist nations, historically bent on central control of schools with the ideological goal of national unity, embarking on decentralized educational reforms to help prepare their students to move from a command society to political democracy. The paper suggests a need for reexamination of the core values of democracy and questions what civics lessons are being omitted in the present debate. (EH)

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# Working Paper Series in Education

AT LAST - "A CIVICS LESSON FOR ALL OF US"

by

R. FREEMAN BUTTS

Working Papers in Education
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THE HOOVER INSTITUTION
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
MAY 1992

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R. Freeman Butts is William F. Russell Professor Emeritus in the Foundations of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. His first major publication on civic education was *The Revival of Civic Learning; A Rationale for Citizenship Education in American Schools* (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1980.) Portions of this article are adapted from his commentary piece entitled, *Citizenship as a National Education Goal* in *Education Week*, December 11, 1991. Other portions are based on his Personal Preface in *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, California: Center for Civic Education, 1991) and a working paper written as background for his remarks on a panel at a meeting called by the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, February 20, 1992 on the topic "Longer-term Strategies for the Reform and Improvement of Civic Education."

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or Board of Overseers of the Hoover Institution.

# AT LAST - "A CIVICS LESSON FOR ALL OF US"

by

R. Freeman Butts

In July 1985, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger proclaimed to the American people that the upcoming Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights should become "a history and civics lesson for all of us." The Bicentennial Commission, which Burger chaired, echoed this purpose throughout the bicentennial years to the end of 1991. A prodigious number of events, activities, and publications attempted to focus the attention of the public and of educational institutions on the "history lesson." Curriculum materials and textbooks for the schools were enormously enriched by the scholarly efforts to revisit the constitutional period of 1787 to 1791 and to make the history come alive for students and the public alike. Many were very successful.

But, at the end of seven years since Chief Justice Burger's proclamation, we must ask, "What of the civics lesson?" What civics lessons about the separation of powers have we learned from the Senate hearings on the Supreme Court nominations of Robert Bork, or David Souter, or Clarence Thomas? What civics lessons about the ideal of popular sovereignty have we learned from the attack ads in the presidential campaign of 1988 or the "character issue" in the primary campaigns of 1992? What civics lessons about the electoral process have we learned from the alienation, anger, and frustration

of the citizenry sparked by check-bouncing in the House of Representatives bank or the drive for limitation of terms for state legislators? What civics lessons about the principle of federalism have we learned from continuing disputes over the role of the federal government versus the state governments in alleviating poverty, unemployment, crime, insufficient health care, discrimination against minorities and women, or inequality in educational opportunity and access? What civics lessons about the separation of church and state have we learned during the current turmoil over parental choice, vouchers, and privatization of public education?

Since 1985, the nation has been racked by such issues. History has often been marshalled to justify one position or another. Or it might better be said that <u>different</u> interpretations of history have been appealed to as reasons for taking different positions. Should the Constitution and Bill of Rights be interpreted narrowly or expansively? Can we simply follow the original intention of the founders in defining the meaning of the Constitution for today? Our views of public policy issues are shaped not only by the version of history we accept but by the conceptions of basic democratic values we have come to hold.

Will history alone supply the necessary guidance to solving complex contemporary issues? My answer is no, but it must immediately be said, however, that history <u>is</u> indispensable for making informed public judgments. Not just any old history or compilation of facts, dates, people, and events. I mean a history that deliberately and explicitly deals with the basic concepts,

principles, and values of constitutional government and makes them the major themes of the study of chronological history. It is this kind of history that is indispensible. But even this kind of history is not sufficient to provide the kind of civics lessons that we need in the present state of our political culture.

We need an enlivened and scholarly civics to go along with an enlivened and scholarly history. We are well on our way to redefining the kind of history lessons we need. Major strides were made in the 1980s to rewrite American and world history to give special place to the developments of democratic ideals and practices. The Bradley Commission, the writings of Paul Gagnon, the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, the California History/Social Science Frameworks for 1981 and 1987 all led the way to the reform of history content and teaching in the schools.

Now, a major project to develop national history standards is being undertaken by the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA with major funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education. The Center is publishing a a 300-page guide for history teaching entitled LESSONS FROM HISTORY. And a National Council for History Standards has been established to be the policy setting board for the National History Standards Project whose task is to do what is being done by other academic and professional groups for English, math, science, and geography, i.e., to outline what American students should know and be able to do in the study of history by the time they finish the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades of school. The Council consists of 28 members including prominent historians of U.S. and world history,

social studies teachers and supervisors, and school administrators. It will in turn seek the advice of many other organizations and task forces in the process of writing the new standards. So we are well on the way to achieving new "history lessons."

A major question is what themes the new history lessons will emphasize. This question has been in the forefront of the debates over multiculturalism and the Western canon. I believe the themes should emphasize the principles and values of constitutional democracy, their antecedents, their origins, development, conflicts, competitors, successes, and failures. History can thus become a major component in the preparation of American citizens. Meanwhile, we need to match the history lessons with related and coordinate civic lessons.

Just recently, the board of directors of the National Council for the Social Studies has highlighted this view by its efforts to articulate a concise definition of social studies consistent with sound democratic principles. At its January 1992 meeting the board agreed on the following definition: "Social studies is the integration of history, the social sciences, and the humanities to promote civic competence." The board explained that it unanimously supported civic competence as the primary purpose and heart of social studies, just as it is an essential goal of schooling in a democratic society.

One may argue that the scope of social studies is not very explicit if it includes all of history, the social sciences, and the humanities, but the key principle of selection of curriculum materials becomes the concept of civic competence. Herein lies the

task of framing the "civics lessons" that Chief Justice Burger called for. We must redefine and enrich the kind of civics lessons that students need if are to be able to cope with the civic muddle we are in. The first step is to redefine the study of civics and government as well as of history in the school curriculum.

The world at large is witnessing two spectacular sea changes affecting the goals and content of civic education. The United States, historically wedded to local control and support of schools, all the while professing the fundamental goal of education to be preparation for common democratic citizenship, is in the process of setting national education goals and standards. Yet the process has given precious little attention to democratic values. At the same time, the former communist nations, historically bent on central control of schools with the ideological goal of national unity, are embarking on decentralized educational reforms, which they hope will prepare their students to move from a command society to political democracy. Two ships passing in the night full speed astern.

Our public debate over setting national standards for American education began with the summit meeting of the president and the 50 governors at Charlottesville in October 1989, which led to the establishment of a National Education Goals Panel. It reached a turning point when the National Council on Education Standards and Testing made its report to the Goals Panel on January 24, 1991. Soon afterwards, the National Governors' Association formally approved a reconfiguration of the Goals Panel to provide better political balance between Democrats and Republicans and between the Administration and Congress. Meanwhile, scores of groups (academic,

professional, business, and government) were hard at work drawing up their own proposals for national standards in various subject matter fields.

This is an astonishing momentum on behalf of national goals and national standards for a country whose conventional wisdom has been that school curriculums should be left to local and state agencies, not national or federal bodies. Much of the engine that has driven this movement has been the desire to make American schools academically more rigorous, especially in mathematics and science, in order to enhance America's competitiveness in the world's economy. This emphasis may well be for the good.

But ever since Charlottesville, something terribly important has been all but missing from the public discourse about our national education goals and standards. Missing has been the recognition that the primary purpose and overarching goal of universal, free, public schooling in the United States is its civic mission: to prepare informed, rational, humane, and participating citizens committed to the constitutional values and principles of American democracy.

To be sure, the Administration's education strategy, America 2000 (August 1991) and the National Education Goals Report of the Goals Panel (October 1991) contained several references to "responsible citizenship." But these documents made little or no effort to define the meaning of responsible American citizenship or the role democratic citizenship should play in shaping the education goals and standards of the nation.

Even more to the point, those school subjects that are usually

considered to be most directly related to citizenship, namely, civics and government, are missing from the list of core subjects, which have insistently been confined to English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. This is especially surprising, inasmuch as civics and government are usually paired with history and geography as essential civic components of the social studies and are widely required by most states and local authorities.

In any case, Goal #3 of the Goals Report of October 1991, entitled "Student Achievement and Citizenship," proclaims that "By the year 2000...every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship..." The executive summary of this first annual report cites the present lack of knowledge in its five core subjects, and then goes on to say,

> "We are also reporting some disappointing information about signs of good citizenship among young Americans. Citizenship represents another outcome of schooling that is, in many ways, as essential for our future as is competence in subject areas. The social, ethical, and political challenges that confront Americans today, as well as the diversity of our people, make it more important than ever that, as a nation of learners, we become an informed and involved people."

The implication here seems to be that even though citizenship may be "in many ways" an important national goal, civics and government are not worthy to be classified as core subjects. On the other hand, the complete version of this first annual report of 1991 not only cites data concerning the inadequate knowledge of students in its five core subjects but then goes on to cite similar data on "Knowledge of Civics," as though civics were a core subject:

> "In 1988, nearly all twelfth graders had a basic knowledge of civics, such as elections, laws, and constitutional rights. However, only about half understood specific government structures and functions, such as separation of powers, and only 6% had a detailed knowledge of institutions of government, such as the Cabinet and the judiciary....In 1988, slightly less than half of the nation's 18-to-20-year-olds were registered to vote, compared to 70% of all U.S. citizens 18 years or older."

I believe that there is good reason to recognize that civics/government is a core subject that should be required of all students as an essential ingredient of education for responsible citizenship and that national standards should be developed in civics and government along with history, geography, and English.

There are heartening signs to support this view. A conference on "Improving History and Civic Education" was held in October 1991 under the auspices of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. All state coordinators of social studies and other curriculum leaders were invited to "examine the implications of the National Goals and to develop a technical assistance network that will assist state and local educators to implement the goals in history, geography, and citizenship." The prominence of references to civics and citizenship at this conference may be a positive development, but it remains to be seen whether civics and government will be designated as specific subjects in the list of core studies or whether the goals of citizenship are to be achieved through history and geography alone. One session was devoted to the topic "History, Geography, and Civics as the Core of the Social Studies," but later sessions on the

training of teachers and testing seemed to be confined to history and geography.

Another sign. In drawing up a framework for its 1994 tests in U.S. History, the National Assessment of Educational Progess has outlined four themes that should be emphasized throughout the history curriculum. The first theme is "Change and Continuity in American Democracy: Ideas, Institutions, Practices, and Controversies." This emphasis could make it possible that a guiding principle for the selection of history content will be what has promoted and what has hindered the development of responsible citizenship in the United States. History may thus be ready to be enlivened by related material in civics and government and in turn to contribute insights to contemporary issues.

Is it possible to agree upon national standards for the study of civics and government as well as for core studies in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography? I believe that it is. True, it is difficult enough to gain widespread agreement on standards in any subject. Can it be done in civic education? My answer is yes, if we are clear about the civic knowledge and values that citizens need to acquire in order to understand and deal with fundamental and controversial public issues.

Public issues involving health care, crime, discrimination, abortion, and education call upon citizens to refine their knowledge and beliefs about the concepts of the public good, individual rights, justice, equality, diversity, truth, and patriotism. Fundamental understanding of such ideas and values gives significant meaning to the term "responsible citizenship" as used by the National

Goals Panel or "civic competence" as used by the National Council for the Social Studies. The knowledge required of responsible citizens today must include study of the underlying values and principles of constitutional government in ways that are appropriate for younger children as well as for required courses in history, civics, and government for older students.

On January 24, 1992 the report of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, Raising Standards for American Education, listed three basic needs for national standards: to promote educational equity; to preserve democracy and enhance the civic culture; and to improve economic competitiveness. The main part of the report proposed that the standard-setting process should be extended from the five core subjects to citizenship education as well as to foreign languages and the arts. The executive summary, however, simply remarks that the standard-setting process should be extended to "other subjects to follow" those of the five core studies. "Citizenship education" is thus left undefined and its academic subject matter left ambiguous in comparison with the readily identifiable and recognizable subjects of the other fields of study.

Setting national standards for civics and government as core subjects would clarify an otherwise vaporous concept of "citizenship education." The standards in civic education would thus parallel those in the other core studies. They would establish a solid scholarly and intellectual grounding of substantive knowledge upon which to base civic education, identify a common core of civic knowledge, values, and skills needed by all citizens, and outline a

challenging learning environment for students possessing a variety of backgrounds and beliefs at a time of expanding pluralism.

The standards should outline the basic civic concepts, historical perspective, and contemporary issues that are useful for a variety of pedagogical approaches in classroom and community. They should keep the attention of teachers, curriculum developers, and test-makers focused on citizenship as they try to thread their way through the minefields laid by extremists in the debates over multiculturalism versus the central core of Western values. In a more general sense, such standards would constitute an intellectual framework that would enable the serious student and citizen to make more informed and more disciplined practical judgments concerning the problems and prospects of democracy at home and in the world.

Finally, a word about education for democratic citizenship in the context of a post-cold-war world, if not an entirely post-communist world. If we are to build "world class standards" in our core studies, we should reckon with the cravings to teach about democracy billowing up in the rest of the world, in Eastern Europe, in the republics of the former Soviet Union, and wherever democracy is on the move in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Several initiatives are already under way for Americans to respond to requests from newly free and democratic governments that are interested in developing their own programs of civic education for democracy. As the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Peace Institute, the Peace Corps, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, and the National Endowment for Democracy prepare to respond to requests for technical

assistance, U.S standards in civics and government could be an indispensible aid in describing the values of democratic citizenship as visualized and practiced in the United States.

As the Group of Seven industrial nations opened their conference in London in early July 1991 to consider what aid they could give to a Soviet Union in dire straits economically and politically, the president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, argued as he had done in his address to the U.S. Congress in February 1990:

> "...it was in the interest of my country, of Europe and of the whole world to help make the Soviet Union a more free, more democratic and more stable place with the emphasis on democracy.
>
> The experience of the postwar period has shown us that no amount of economic assistance will make a totalitarian country more prosperous unless it is also made more democratic."

In the long run, a truly viable world peace can be maintained only if democratic citizenship becomes the achievable goal of education in all countries, not simply the United States. Democratic societies do not go to war with one another. So civic education for democratic citizenship is a requirement in all those countries seeking a transition from totalitarianism to democracy. Democratic education is a necessary foundation for their political and economic transformation just as it is in ours.

We do not presume to tell other countries how they should conduct their civic education. But as they genuinely and actively seek U.S. cooperation and help (and many of the new governments and their educators are doing just that), U.S. national standards in civics and government would provide an excellent source from which they could gain an understanding of the goals of American civic

education as visualized by competent scholars in the United States. The standards dealing with fundamental democratic ideas germinating historically in many parts of the world could promote a common understanding of such concepts as political authority, the nature of the state, types of government, morality and religion in politics, internationtal law, human rights, and civic virtue.

We are now in the midst of a presidential election year in which all candidates profess that educational improvement is high on their political agendas, and political polls regularly show that education is one of the persistent worries of the people themselves. But we are haunted with memories of past elections in which alienated or angry citizens have reacted with outbursts of special-interest voting - or with monumental apathy. Youth especially seemed to be disconnected from political life. And, now, this election year threatens to be derailed by a further degradation of the democratic electoral process, an ideal which the newly freed countries have been so eager to attain. We need to bolster our commitment to the civic dispositions of civility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, and respect for diversity if we are to maintain and strengthen the healthy functioning and common good of our cherished democratic political system.

It would be the ultimate irony of the twentieth century's world-wide democratic revolution if the American Republic should be seriously crippled or mortally wounded by disaffection, anger, frustration, and loss of faith of the people in their government or by corruption, vituperation of political discourse, greed, or self-indulgence on the part of politicians just as communist

dictatorships are collapsing and their people are demanding political democracy and freedom in the idiom of Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln.

When the National Education Goals Panel draws up its second annual Report Card in October 1992 just before our presidential election, citizenship should be at the top of its agenda. The study of civics and government should be given a prominent role in setting and achieving national education standards. In future report cards we dare not let education for citizenship be given a grade of "F" - or simply be marked "Absent."

So, what do I propose for longer-term strategies for the reform and improvement of civic education? Let's not only try to reform civic education by relying on periodic special projects supported by short-term grants from foundations and government, each tackling bits and pieces of the curriculum devoted to education for responsible citizenship, but, in addition, let's concentrate on making civic education a regular, recognizable, and prominent part of the curriculum, the life, and the culture of all educational institutions from elementary to graduate school. Yes, "education for responsible citizenship" is a generalized goal for all of elementary and secondary education, but it also needs its special cultivators.

This is no easy task. We must come to terms with such nagging political and academic issues as:

1. The central role of history and geography vis-a-vis the role of civics, government, economics, and other social sciences.

2. Parental choice and local school management vis-a-vis national standards and national testing.

3. Multiculturalism versus the Western canon.

4. The role of values (whether moral, religious, family, or civic) versus value-neutral objectives and content.

5. The role of "alternative certification" of teachers versus the role of professional schools and departments of education.

I will not try to argue the case for solving these and other seemingly intractable issues here. I refer briefly to the first and fifth of the issues mentioned above.

I do not believe that English, history, and geography can do all that the curriculum must do in preparing American youth for citizenship. They cannot carry the whole obligation that rests on the humanities and the social sciences for fostering American citizenship in an interconnected and post-cold-war world. I say this as one who not only taught chronological history for more than forty years at Teachers College, but who also taught courses in the social and philosophical foundations of education at the same time. I believe that both must be present in the programs for the education of teachers, and the best way is to link them together by the concepts and perspectives germane to citizenship.

Therefore, I propose the following longer-term strategies for items 1 and 5:

1. As a minimum, we should identify civics/government as a core subject for standard setting in the school curriculum from grades 4-12. Simple reference to "citizenship education" continues to be too slippery and vague a term to signify a rigorous academic subject matter. The term makes a good rallying point as a rhetorical goal, but it does not sound like a substantive subject matter in the

way the other core studies do. Civics/government does and is. It has the added merit that it includes elements of active experience and civic participation seldom associated with the other core studies.

Indeed, those who are setting out to design "a new generation of American schools" should not only be thinking about structural and teaching innovations to promote better learning in science or math or art or language but also how to promote commitment to public service - to prepare for a career as a public servant as well as for a lifetime of committed citizenship. This could include the establishment of public service schools as well as such special schools devoted to science, technology, business, vocation, health care, performing arts, and the like.

At a time when the public is increasingly angry with public officials and frustrated with political processes, they need more than ever to be making it possible and attractive for dedicated and well trained young people to enter the public service with enthusiasm and commitment to the public good. While we debate whether government should be more active or less active in the solution of public problems, it is imperative that committed and well informed young people be encouraged and prepared to take an active part no matter what the size or function of government may turn out to be.

5. We should launch a major effort to reform the education of teachers (both pre-service and in-service) in two major ways:

a. Design and construct a teaching major in civics and government for which history and geography are minors, just as government and geography are minors for majors in history. This

requires the cooperation of liberal arts departments and schools of education (especially faculty members who deal with political science, political philosophy, political sociology, political economy, public administration, law, and international relations). The central theme throughout this major should deliberately focus on the meaning of citizenship in a democratic society viewed from conceptual, historical, and contemporary perspectives.

Promising developments to promote this process have been energized in the liberal arts fields in recent years. They are symbolized by the Kettering Foundation's continuing support of The Civic Arts Review, The Kettering Review, and especially the recently published volume, Higher Education and the Practice of Democratic Politics. As the editor, Bernard Murchland, said in his introduction, this "Political Education Reader" was written by more than a score of scholars who "succeed in respiriting the core concepts of citizenship, democracy, and liberal education. Moreover they succeed in establishing linkages between these concepts."

Here is a ready-made cadre of scholars who might be recruited (along with faculty members in the foundations of education, social studies, and curriculum and instruction) to improve the education of teachers of civics/government for the schools.

b. Design and construct programs for preparing all teachers and educational administrators for what they need to know and be able to do with regard to their role as professional educators in a democratic constitutional order. Educators need far better preparation for their distinctive pro bono role in promoting the public good through education.

Put another way: All teachers and administrators need to develop a coherent and defensible conception of democratic citizenship, an intellectual framework, from which to view the role they should play in American democratic society. This is primarily the task of what is known in the profession as the "foundations of education." The term and the basic ideas originated at Teachers College, Columbia University in the early 1930s where I taught from 1935 to 1975. During the 1940s variations on the idea and a variety of practices arose in virtually all major institutions of teacher education in the United States.

The foundations of education promote understanding of the role of education in the social, cultural, civic, and ethical life of American society. Here, the fundamental purposes, institutions, and policies of education, broadly conceived, are subjected to the scholarly analysis and perspectives of the social sciences and humanities, especially history, political science, political philsophy, law, sociology, anthropology, economics, religion, and comparative and international studies. The fundamental character of a profession is the capacity of its members to make informed judgments about the public good and to engage in those contributions the profession can make to the general welfare as well as to the individual welfare of the persons for whom it has responsibility. If teaching is to become a genuine profession, it must include studies that bring the scholarship of the academic disciplines to bear upon the policies, practices, and issues facing education, especially those involving such basic values of American society as the public good, justice, freedom, equality, and diversity.

During the 1960s and 1970s the number of professional organizations in the foundations fields proliferated until they joined together to form the Council of Learned Societies in Education. The orginal seven societies have become nineteen, most of them concerned primarily with the history of education, philosophy of education, politics and education, comparative and international education, and educational policy studies. In 1986 the Council issued a set of Standards setting forth criteria for the evaluation of programs designed for the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers and administrators and for the graduate preparation of faculty members in the foundations fields.

The Standards were originally developed by a task force of the American Educational Studies Association and then reviewed, modified, and endorsed by the organization members of the Council:

> "From its origin in the 1930s, Foundations of Education has been subjected to a variety of interpretations and approaches....The Council of Learned Societies in Education takes the official position of supporting a diversity of Foundations of Education arrangements in relation to academic, teacher-education, and community groups. This position is based on the belief that an overarching and profoundly important academic and professional purpose unifies persons who identify with the various approaches to Foundatiuons of Education, namely, the development of interpretative, normative, and critical perspectives on education, including non-schooling enterprises. There is, moreover, a shared contemporaneous orientation among Foundations of Education scholars -a deep concern for present circumstances, events, and conditions. In responding to the social issues and crises of the times, Foundations of Education scholars maintain a professional and intellectual tradition which was initiated in the 10930s."

Here is another cadre of scholars centered in the schools of education of the nation who could be recruited to work with the scholars in the liberal arts mentioned above, to design programs that would bring together the disciplines of the social sciences, the humanities, and education to rejuvenate civic learning in the preparation of the teaching profession and thus re-energize civic education in the schools.

Upon retiring from Teachers College in 1975 I continued my efforts for reform of civic education through my work as a consultant with the Danforth and Kettering Foundations and as a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. We took a notable step toward reviving such programs at the "National Seminar on Civic Learning in the Education of the Teaching Profession" held at the Hoover Institution in 1984. It was co-sponsored by a dozen academic and professional education organizations and received major financial support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Kettering Foundation as well as the Hoover Institution.

A volume entitled Civic Learning for Teachers: Capstone for Educational Reform was published in 1985, but the surge of the educational reform movement took off in other directions and gave relatively little heed to the civic education of the teaching profession. No center of coordination for follow-through or institutionalization was formed. Now is the time to do just that. The reform movement has finally come around to the importance of the quality of the teacher and the importance of teacher education.

I note that John Goodlad's Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington calls for a curriculum in teacher education that deals among other things with "the moral and political dimensions of teaching in a democracy." We not only need more innovative projects elsewhere that could be institutionalized as models for teacher education throughout the country, but, especially, we need leadership programs that will encourage the liberal arts faculties and the schools of education to join in embedding civic education at the heart of teacher education for all teachers of all subjects as well as for teachers of civics/government. Without such rigorous and creative programs, national standards for civic education in elementary and secondary schools will not be realized either in the shorter term or in the longer term.

Fortunately, in my view, there is now available a major resource for all those who are working at the special tasks I have outlined above. Whatever the outcome of the efforts to formulate national goals and standards for American education, one of the most significant developments in civic education has been the preparation of a new curriculum framework called CIVITAS, a collaborative project of the Center for Civic Education and the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship, supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. It was published in October 1991 and distributed by the National Council for the Social Studies. Its bulk of some 665 pages has led me to dub it the "New Leviathan," though it surely is not what Thomas Hobbes had in mind.

The genius of CIVITAS is that it deliberately seeks to define the meaning of American citizenship and outlines the civic values, the civic knowledge, and the civic skills that American citizens need to possess in order to live up to the ideals of democratic constitutional government. It goes far beyond any current curriculum framework, or any set of instructional materials, or any combination of textbooks in dealing with the meaning of American citizenship and the education that must prepare for it.

The purpose of CIVITAS is no less than to formulate a coherent and defensible conception of citizenship that will be of use to those who are struggling to design more effective programs for the civic education of all American youth. The product is a curriculum framework for the schools (kindergarten through grade 12) developed by scholars, professional educators, and public leaders who hold a broad range of political, economic, and social views. The goal was to establish a solid intellectual and scholarly grounding for civic education in the schools, propose a common core of knowledge, values, and skills desirable for all students in the nation to achieve, and outline a desirable school learning environment appropriate for students holding a diversity of beliefs and reflecting an expanding plurality of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious communities in the United States.

The assumption was that the increasingly complex conditions and issues facing American citizens could best be resolved by informed and responsible participation by the citizenry, a kind of participation that is rooted not only in civic action but in an understanding of our commitment to basic democratic values, what the

Founders called the civic virtue required of citizens in a republic.

In order to establish this solid intellectual and scholarly grounding necessary for civic education in the schools, CIVITAS drew upon leading scholars from several academic fields, especially from history, political science, political philosophy, law, and other social sciences and humanities as well as from experienced professionals in education and public service. It outlines in detail the values fundamental to the civic virtue, the common core of civic knowledge and skills, and the civic participation that are necessary to achieve Goal #3 cited by the governors' National Goals Panel. Although drawn up independently and prior to the agreement on education goals, CIVITAS should be extremely useful to all parties now involved in the formulation of national goals, national standards, and national assessments.

CIVITAS does not propose a national curriculum and does not propose a uniform or single set of national tests, but it was designed, developed, and field tested by a diverse group of educators and public leaders who worked together as members of its Framework Development Committee and its National Review Council; its National Teachers' Advisory Committee included representatives from virtually all states and many points of view. Thus, a wide consensus arose.

CIVITAS attempts to promote a comprehensive national effort by the nation's schools and voluntary organizations to design substantive, effective, and vital programs of civic education. It seeks to outline the content and core of knowledge that define the values, concepts, and principles underlying the American politically

organized community and democratic constitutional order, And it seeks to define the behavior of civility befitting a citizen's skills and commitments desirable for participation in forming the judgments required for the public good of a democratic society.

Education for citizenship is the primary reason for establishing universal education in the American Republic: i.e., to develop among all students, whether in private or in public schools, the virtues, sentiments, knowledge, and skills of good citizenship. Paramount in this general civic purpose is education that will develop in all students a commitment to the fundamental principles and values of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and an understanding of the issues and controversies arising in their history and in their contemporary practice. Generalized statements such as these are easy to come by in reports of public commissions and in the preambles to curriculum guides and textbooks. But CIVITAS takes them seriously and attempts to spell them out with scholarly care and detail for all who would read and think seriously about the principles - and the future - of American democracy.

Professional educators in the U.S. have historically been opposed to national curriculums and national tests. On April 3, 1991 a coalition of fifty educational and civil rights groups urged President Bush and the Congress to oppose "the stampede to national tests." Since then the clamor against national tests has arisen not only from some minority groups but also from many professional educators and political leaders in Congress. A report by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment cautioned that a system of national assessment in eduation should not be undertaken

without further research.

Furthermore, many childrens' advocacy groups believe that minority children in poor school districts would be still further disadvantaged if they were obliged to compete on national exams for which their poorer schools had not prepared them. They argue that the quality of schools and their teachers must be improved before uniform national assessments would be fair for children already made vulnerable by poverty, segregation, discrimination, or unequal access to educational opportunity. In January 1992 a group of fifty leading educators argued that "any policy to establish benchmarks for achievement without creating equity in the educational resources available to children would be a cruel hoax."

Despite the controversy over national tests, the subject of national standards is less taboo than it once was. Increasing numbers of professional educators are joining political and business leaders in calling for national standards that will stimulate student achievement but will not infringe on the autonomy of local school authorities and teachers to design a curriculum appropriate for their schools.

Whatever the merits of the debate over national tests may be, the results of a survey conducted by the Center for Civic Education in 1988 are sobering. The Center analyzed more than 40 state social studies frameworks dealing with civic education. Major findings include:

*The question of what citizenship means was seldom addressed.

*Little was said about the aims of citizenship education.

*Descriptions of civic education as a subject tend toward

conceptual fuzziness and diffusion.

*In only a few instances could a specific rationale for civic education be found.

CIVITAS seeks to remedy these defects. Every topic in CIVITAS is treated from three perspectives: conceptual, historical, and contemporary. It asserts the need for civic education to be content-oriented, value-oriented, and skills-oriented. This is made clear in each of the three major sections of CIVITAS: Civic Virtue, Civic Participation, and Civic Knowledge. It seeks to strike a balance between the civic values comprising the common core of democratic constitutional government and the civic values of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity.

One of the most innovative aspects of CIVITAS is its advocacy of the idea of civic virtue as an expression of the overarching purpose of civic education. The ultimate goal of CIVITAS is to enable students equipped with the requisite civic knowledge and the skills of civic participation to make their own commitment, carried to adulthood, to the civic values deemed necessary for the nurture and strengthening of the ideals of American democracy. Civic virtue is described in CIVITAS in terms of civic dispositions and civic commitments.

Civic dispositions refer to those attitudes and habits of mind that are most conducive to the healthy functioning and common good of the democratic system:

*civility

*individual responsibility

*self-discipline

*civic-mindedness

*open-mindedness

*willingness to compromise

*toleration of diversity

*patience and persistence

*compassion for others

*generosity

*loyalty

Civic commitments refer to the freely given, reasoned commitments of the citizen to the fundamental principles and values of American constitutional democracy. The main principles are:

*popular sovereignty

*constitutional government

*the rule of law

*separation of powers

*checks and balances

*minority rights

*civilian control of the military

*separation of church and state

*the power of the purse

*federalism

One of the most distinctive innovations of CIVITAS is the extensive treatment of civic values, focusing on those civic values that constitute a broad consensus and common core of knowledge for informed democratic citizens:

*the public good

*individual rights

*life

*liberty - personal, political, and economic freedom

*the pursuit of happiness

*justice

*equality - political, legal, social, and economic equality

*diversity

*truth

*patriotism

CIVITAS appears at just the right moment in the United States. Dare I say a "defining moment?" It is not hastily or precipitously thrown together to meet a new initiative from the governors or the White House. But it does respond remarkably well to the present stage of the decade-long educational reform movement, which has begun to focus on the common core of knowledge and curriculum content that should be taught in all American schools, succinctly summarized in the phrase "what all students ought to know and be able to do." CIVITAS is indispensable as a guide to learning the civics lessons of the post-bicentennial era as well as the post-cold-war world.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the phrase "civic virtue" would have been laughed out of the classroom or off the campus. But times have changed. Now, when the American electorate should be seriously engrossed in its most fundamental civic task of selecting its office holders, large numbers of citizens are obviously frustrated, alienated, and angry over perceived corruption

and scandal in both the public and private sectors. Who can say that civic virtue is not imperatively needed by the present and would-be leaders of the American Republic - or by the citizens who put them into positions of public duty? Reenergizing a sense of civic virtue worthy of the history lessons of the founding era may be the single most important item on the agenda of American education.

As said earlier, I have been associated for more than forty years with a number of special projects and movements especially designed to improve education for citizenship. Now, for more than a decade my most satisfying and fruitful associations have been with the Center for Civic Education and the Council for the Advancemnet of Citizenship. Together, they have produced CIVITAS, which I believe is by far the most comprehensive and coherent approach to civic education of those forty years. Together, in the effort to build on the past and break new ground, they and their associates have been able not only to mobilize the combined talents of scores of academic scholars and professional educators but also the leaders of more than eighty public spirited national organizations. I hope that they will be able to convince the public and the educational reformers of the 1990s that competent achievement in the knowledge and values arising from the study of civics and government is a core requirement for preparing all youth to become participating and responsible American citizens. If they are successful, we can at last start learning the civics lesson for all of us that was desired by the Bicentennial Commission. If they are not successful this time, we.....(?)